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Two Senators Decry Leaks By Administration Sources

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The two top members of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence said yesterday that leaks of sensitive material to the news media by the administration are "out of hand" and have created a national security crisis.

Sens. David F. Durenberger (R-Minn.), the chairman, and Patrick J. Leahy (D-Vt.), the vice chairman, cited as the most recent instance a report in The Washington Post yesterday about a Central Intelligence Agency officer who was abducted and tortured by Ethiopian security police while helping to run a covert CIA propaganda campaign against the Marxist government in Addis Ababa.

Durenberger and Leahy said they would "neither confirm nor deny the existence of any covert program in Ethiopia, nor we will comment on any of the alleged facts in the story."

"The point is that this story was clearly leaked by knowledgeable officials in the administration for purely political purposes," they said.

"If the facts are true, a sensitive program has been compromised and the lives of CIA personnel and their agents endangered.

"But even if the entire story is a fabrication or exaggeration, it is still likely to be believed and have the same net effect," they said. The story "is clearly traceable to administration officials and reflects an almost total lack of discipline in speaking to the press."

The Post reported in the article that the CIA officer was abducted Dec. 20, 1983, at the home of Ethiopian dissidents. The officer was tortured and interrogated and released on Feb. 4, 1984, after he had signed a confession that he worked for the CIA.

Upon the officer's release, the Ethiopian government expelled three other CIA officers working under diplomatic cover at the U.S. embassy in Addis Ababa and reportedly arrested a number of other dissidents in the months following the incident.

The U.S. government retaliated by expelling two Ethiopian diplomats.